

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PONTA 00191 012127Z

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O 011845Z MAY 76

FM AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1445

AMEMBASSY LISBON IMMEDIATE

INFO AMCONSUL OPORTO IMMEDIATE

EUDOVAA/COMUSFORAZ

CINCEUR

CINCLANT

C O N F I D E N T I A L PONTA DELGADA 0191

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PINT, PO

SUBJ: CRISIS BREWING IN AZORES

1. THE REGIONAL JUNTA HAS RECEIVED WORD THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS APPROVED THE AZOREAN STATUTE OF AUTONOMY BUT WITH SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES. THESE CHANGES WERE MADE IN THE TEXT SUBMITTED BY THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL APPOINTED COMMITTEE WHICH HAD ADJUSTED THE STATUTE TO THE CONSTITUTION. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS APPOINTED A COMMITTEE, CONSISTING OF ALMEIDA SANTOS, ALMEIDA COSTA, VEGA DE OLIVEIRA (PCP), AND A SECRETARY OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE WHO RECOMMENDED THE CHANGES. THE COUNCIL HAS REPORTEDLY ELIMINATED THE RIGHT OF AZOREANS ON THE CONTINENT AND OUTSIDE OF PORTUGAL TO VOTE IN LOCAL ELECTIONS, COMPLETELY ALTERED THE CAREFULLY WORKED OUT SCHEME OF REPRESENTATION IN THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY, CHANGED PROVISIONS RELATING TO AZOREAN PARTICIPATION IN BASE NEGOTIATIONS AND ALSO REPORTEDLY ALTERED THE FINANCIAL AND PLANNING PROVISIONS. NO ONE HERE HAS YET SEEN THE FINAL TEXT OF THE STATUTE, BUT A PPD MINISTER HAS INFORMED THE LOCAL PARTY OF SOME OF THE CHANGES. REPORTEDLY THE PPD MEMBERS PRESENT AT THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

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PAGE 02 PONTA 00191 012127Z

MEETING WENT ON RECORD AGAINST THE ALTERATIONS.

2. JOSE PACHECO DE ALMEIDA, PPD MEMBER OF THE REGIONAL JUNTA, TOLD ME THE PPD FROM PONTA DELGADA, ANGRA AND HORTA HAVE ALL AGREED THAT IF THE FINAL TEXT IS INDEED AS REPORTED, WHICH SEEMS LIKELY, THE PPD MEMBERS ARE ALL PLANNING TO LEAVE THE JUNTA AND ALL OTHER GOVERNMENTAL BODIES IN THE AZORES AND TO CALL FOR DEMONSTRATIONS. THE PPD WILL WANT TO SEE THE FINAL TEXT OF THE STATUTE BEFORE MAKING A DECISION. THE TEXT IS EXPECTED HERE MAY 3. ALMEIDA ALSO SAID THAT WITHIN THE LAST FEW DAYS, GENERAL MAGALHAES TOLD GENERAL EANES THAT IF THERE WERE SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES IN THE STATUTE OF AUTONOMY, HE, EANES, WOULD HAVE TO FIND A REPLACEMENT FOR MAGALHAES. SO FAR THE PUBLIC IS UNAWARE THAT SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE STATUTE.

3. COMMENT: AZOREANS ARE NO MORE PREPARED NOW THAN THEY HAVE BEEN IN THE LAST YEAR TO ACCEPT UNDESIRE DECISIONS FROM LISBON. SINCE THE TEXT OF THE STATUTE HAD ALREADY BEEN CHANGED TO CONFORM TO THE CONSTITUTION, AZOREANS SEE NO VALID REASON FOR THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' ACTION TO FURTHER RESTRICT THEIR AUTONOMY AND INTERFERE WITH THEIR VIEWS ON HOW TO RUN THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT. THE FACT THAT THE FOUR-MAN COMMITTEE WHICH SUGGESTED THE CHANGES INCLUDE ONE COMMUNIST AND ALMEIDA SANTOS, WHO IS UNPOPULAR HERE, MAKES THE ACTION EVEN MORE UNPALATABLE. GENERAL MAGALHAES' REPORTED THREAT TO QUIT, MAKES THE POTENTIAL CRISIS EVEN MORE SERIOUS.

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